

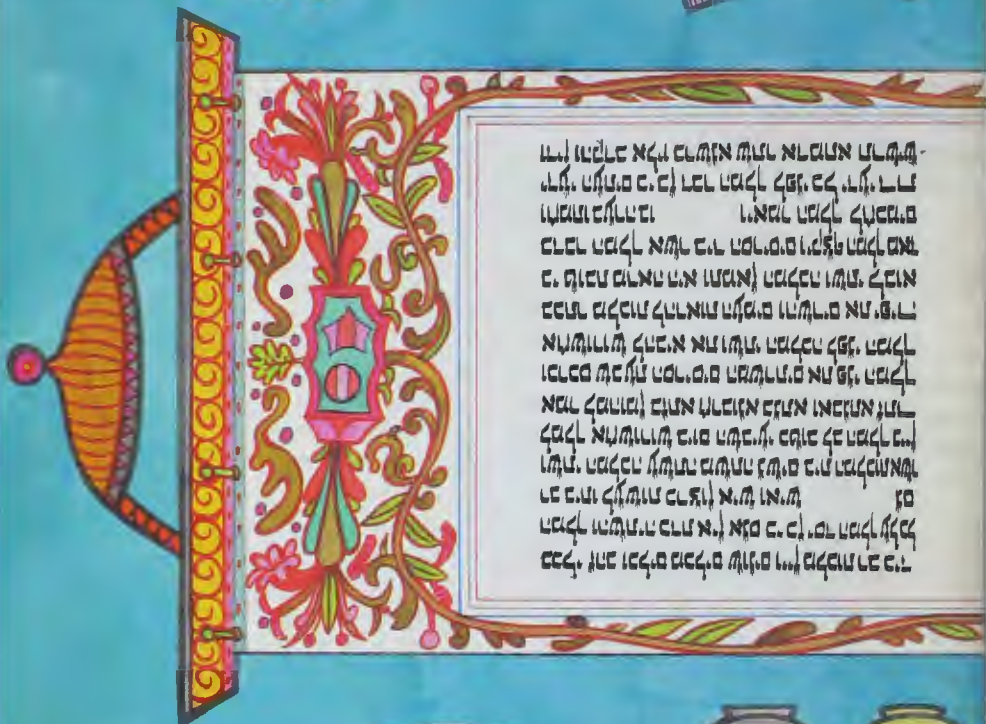


מִגַּלַּת אֶסְתֵּר *the BOOK of ESTHER*

יְהוָה בִּימֵי אַחֲשֵׁרוּשׁ הוּא אַחֲשֵׁרוּשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדָּר
וְעַד כּוֹשׁ שִׁבְעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְרִינָה בִּימֵי הָרֶם
כְּשֶׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוּשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מְלָכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר
בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה בְּשֶׁנֶּת שְׁלוֹשׁ לַמָּלְכוֹת עָשָׂה מִשְׁחָה
לְכָל שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל פָּרֶס וּמְרֵי הַפֶּרֶת מֵמִים
וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לִפְנֵי בְהִרְאֹתוֹ אֶת עֲשָׂר כְּבוֹד
מְלָכוּתוֹ וְאֵת יֶקֶר תְּפָאֶרֶת לְהַדְלֹת יָמִים רַבִּים
שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאֵת יוֹם וּבְמִלּוֹאֵת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה
עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל הָעָם הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה
לְמַגְדִּיל וְעַד קֶטָן מִשְׁחָה שִׁבְעָה יָמִים בְּחָצֵר גִּלְתָּ
בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחֹזֶר כִּרְפֶּס וּתְכֵלֶת אַחֲזָה בְּחִבְלֵי כּוֹץ
וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל גְּלִילֵי כִסֵּא וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִטּוֹת זָרֵב
וּכְסֵף עַל רֹאשׁ בֶּהֱטָה וְשֵׁשׁ וּדָר וּסְחָרֶת וְהַשְׁקוֹת

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*To Edythe
Eshet Hayil,
Source of Blessing.*

A special thanks to the multitalented Arthur Friedman, who has robed the text with powerful imaginative drawings and given flesh and the breath of life to this exciting historical drama. His artistic imagery has captured, with extraordinary clarity and in glowing colors, the authentic Persian milieu.

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INTRODUCTION

"This happened during the days of King Ahchashverosh" — thus the Book of Esther begins the breathtaking story of intrigue, ruthlessness, and deliverance in the ancient land of Persia over 2,000 years ago.

The simple parchment scroll brings to life the rich images of the participants in this exciting Jewish historical drama.

Esther, the heroine, feminine in beauty, risks her life to save the Jews of Persia from a genocidal massacre.

Mordechi, her uncle, God-fearing and resolute in the face of impending disaster.

Haman, the demonic vizier of Persia, who decides to annihilate the Jews and use their property and wealth to further his own political aims.

King Ahchashverosh, the licentious, hard-drinking, indecisive monarch, who gives Haman permission to destroy the Jews.

The story of Esther is the eternal story of hatred which has been repeated in different countries in almost every generation to the present time.

Over the centuries, community and family Purims have been set aside to commemorate localized deliverances from great evils and tyrants. They were celebrated with festivities and often with the reading of a scroll telling the story of their particular deliverance.

At times, there were no miracles. There was no Purim for the Jews of Europe during the Nazi period. Under the diabolical leadership of Hitler, six million innocents were murdered, gassed and burned in the death camps of Germany.

Today, Purim is the merriest holiday of the Jewish year. It is celebrated with Shalach Manot, carnivals, parties, masquerades, eating, carousing, and even silliness.

It is the one day of the year when even drunkenness is tolerated. The Talmud declares: "A person is obligated to drink enough on Purim so that he cannot distinguish between 'Blessed is Mordechi' and 'Cursed is Haman.'" Interestingly enough, the numerical value of both of these Hebrew phrases is identical — 502.

For 2,000 years the story of Esther has been like an oasis in the desert which again and again springs to life and gives us hope and strength in times of duress. The festival of Purim offers Jews a lesson of courage and faith. In darkest moments the festivities cheered the Jews and inspired them with hope of final victory over their enemies, just as Esther and Mordechi triumphed over Haman.

Before the Megillah is read, the reader chants the following three blessings:

ברוך אתה יי. אלהינו מלך העולם. אשר קדשנו במצותיו. וצונו על-מקרא מגילה:

ברוך אתה יי. אלהינו מלך העולם. שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם. בזמן הזה:

ברוך אתה יי. אלהינו מלך העולם. שהחיינו. וקיימנו. והגיענו לזמן הזה:

פָּרָק א'

א א ניהי בימי אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הוּא אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדּוֹ וְעַד־כּוֹשׁ
 שְׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה: ב בַּיָּמִים הֵהֵם כְּשֶׁבֶת א הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּירָה: ג בְּשָׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ
 לְמָלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֶּה לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל א פָּרַס וּמְדֵי הַפָּרָתָמִים
 וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לִפְנָיו: ד בַּהֲרֹאֲתוֹ אֶת־עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת־יָקָר
 תְּפָאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאָה יוֹם: ה וּבְמָלֹאֶת א
 הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל־הָעָם הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּירָה
 לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד־קֶטֶן מִשְׁתֶּה שְׁבַע־יָמִים בַּחֲצַר גִּנַּת בֵּיתֵן הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 ו תּוֹר א כִּרְפָס וּתְכֵלֶת אָחוֹז בַּחֲבִל־בוֹץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל־גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף
 וְעִמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מְטוֹת א זָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל הַצִּפֹּת בַּהֲטֹנָשׁ וְגֵר וּסְחָרָת:

1:2 The Persian king resided in Shushan (Susa) only during the winter. The royal court moved to Persepolis for the summer months, when the heat of Shushan became unbearably hot.

1:6 At Persepolis, archeologists have unearthed the remains of several stone Persian palaces. One of them has an elaborately decorated throne room 200 feet by 200 feet. A huge room of this size can hold thousands of people.



CHAPTER ONE

1. This happened during the days of King Ah-chash-ver-osh, who ruled one hundred and twenty-seven provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia.

2. At the time that King Ah-chash-ver-osh ruled over his kingdom from the capital, Shushan, the Fortress,

3. in the third year of his rule, he made a feast for all of his princes, advisors, and army officers.

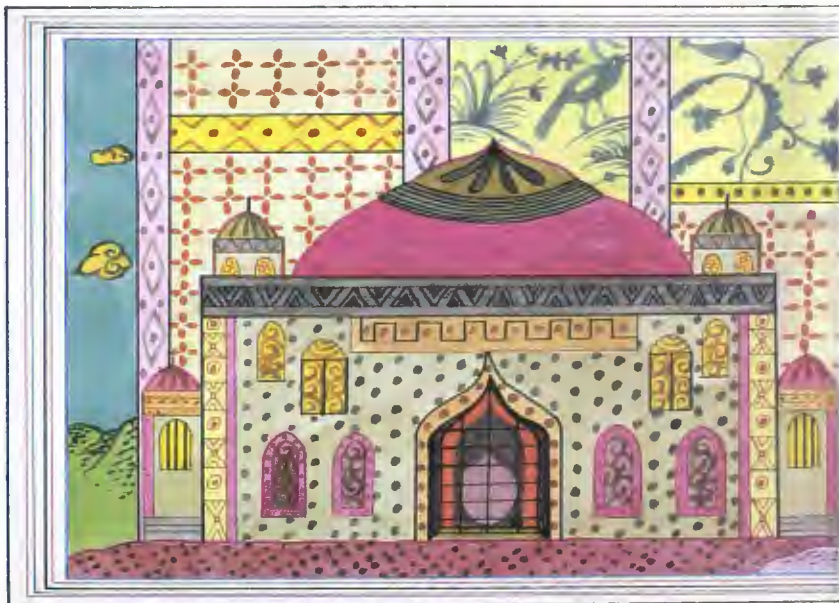
4. At that party the king showed off his great riches and the glory of his kingdom. This grand celebration lasted for 180 days.

5. When the celebration was over, the king made another feast for the people of Shushan, great and small, a feast which lasted seven days. This feast took place in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

6. The palace was decorated with white, green and blue curtains tied with ribbons of linen and purple, on rods of silver and pillars of marble; benches of gold and silver stood upon a floor covered with red, white, yellow and black marble.

1:1 Today, the Jews of India are called "B'nai Israel" and those of Ethiopia are called "Falashas."

1:1 Achashverosh is usually identified as Xerxes, or Khshayarsha, the son of Doryavash (486–465 B.C.E.). According to Greek sources, Xerxes — Achashverosh — was a powerful but temperamental ruler, a character that fits the king in the Book of Esther.



ו והשקות בכלי זָהָב וכלים מפְּלִים שוֹנִים ויִּזְן מַלְכוּת רַב בֶּיֶד
הַמֶּלֶךְ: ^ח והשתייה כִּדָּת אֵין אִגָּס כִּי־כֵן | יִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל פֶּלֶר־רַב בֵּיתוֹ
לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ־ נָאִישׁ: ^ט גַּם וּשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתָּה
נָשִׁים בֵּית הַמִּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֹׁרוֹשׁ: ^י בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי כָּטוֹב
לְבִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיָּין אָמַר לְמַהוּמָן בְּזֹמָא חֲרַבְנָא בְּגִתָּא וְאִבְגָּתָא וְתַר
וְכַרְפָּס שִׁבְעַת הַפְּרִיסִים הַמְּשֻׁרְתִּים אֶת־פָּנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֹׁרוֹשׁ:
יֵא לְהִבִּיא אֶת־וּשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכַתֵּר מַלְכוּת לְהִרְאוֹת
הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת־יָפְיָה כִּי־טוֹבַת מִרְאֶה הִיא: ^{יב} וְתַמְאָן הַמֶּלֶכָּה
וּשְׁתִּי לְבוֹא בְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בֶּיֶד הַפְּרִיסִים וַיִּקְצֹף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד
וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעֵרָה בּוֹ: ^ס יג וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לַחֲכָמִים יִדְעִי הָעֵתִים כִּי־כֵן
דִּבֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָּל־ יִדְעֵי דָת וְדִין: ^{יד} וְהִקְרַב אֵלָיו כְּרָשָׁנָא שְׁתַּר
אַדְמָתָא תְּרַשִׁישׁ מֶרֶס מְרֻסָּא מְמוּיָן שִׁבְעַת שָׂרִי | פָּרַס וּמְדִי רֹאִי
פָּנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיֹּשְׁבִים הָרַשְׁנָה בַּמִּלְכוּת: ^{טו} כְּדָת מַה־לַּעֲשׂוֹת בַּמִּלְכָּה
וּשְׁתִּי עַל | אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשְׂתָה אֶת־מֵאמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֹׁרוֹשׁ בֶּיֶד
הַפְּרִיסִים: ^ס טז וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹמְכָן (ממוכן קרי) לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא
עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבָדּוֹ עֲזָתָה וּשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָּה כִּי עַל־כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל־ כָּל־
הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֹׁרוֹשׁ: ^{יז} כִּי־יֵצֵא דִבְרֵי־
הַמֶּלֶכָּה עַל־כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים לְהַבְנוֹת בַּעֲלֵיהֶן בַּעֲמִינֵיהֶן בְּאִמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ
אַחְשֹׁרוֹשׁ אָמַר לְהִבִּיא אֶת־וּשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָּה לִפְנָיו וְלֹא־בָּאָה:
יח וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תֵּאמְרָנָה | שָׂרוֹת פָּרַס־וּמְדִי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דִּבְרֵי
הַמֶּלֶכָּה לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וּכְדִי בְּזִיוֹן וְקִצְף: ^{יט} אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
יֵצֵא דִבְרֵי מַלְכוּת מִלִּפְנָיו וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּדָתִי פָּרַס־וּמְדִי וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר אֲשֶׁר

1:15 Achashverosh called the legal experts and hoped that they could find a loophole and save his beloved Vashti. They could not restore her to the throne, but they saved her life and exiled her.

1:19 Every year the eunuchs selected a new batch of beauties for the king's harem.

7. The guests drank great quantities of wine from golden cups in many shapes and forms,

8. for the King commanded that no man was to be forced to drink too much, but only as much as they wanted.

9. Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women. This celebration took place in the palace of King Ah-chash-ver-osh.

10. On the seventh day of the feast, when the king was a bit drunk with wine, he commanded his seven closest servants, the eunuchs Mehuman, Bizzetha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas,

11. to bring Queen Vashti, dressed in her royal crown so that the people could see how beautiful she was.

12. But Queen Vashti refused to parade before the drunken guests; this refusal made the king very angry.

13. The angry king called a meeting of his experts on Persian law, as was customary.

14. The experts were: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memuchan — seven of the most important princes of Persia and Media.

15. He asked what he should do to Queen Vashti, who had disobeyed him.

16. Memuchan answered on behalf of the others. “Not only has Queen Vashti disobeyed the king, but she has also offended all the princes and people in everyone of the king’s provinces.

17. For the news of her behavior will spread throughout the kingdom, and all the women will join her in disobeying their husbands. They will say, ‘The king commanded Queen Vashti to appear before him and she refused to come.’

18. At this moment, the wives of the princes of Persia and Media are answering their husbands the same way Vashti answered you: that kind of attitude will cause family dissension.

19. If the king agrees, let him issue a royal order, a Persian decree that can never be changed. Send Vashti into exile and choose a new queen to replace her.

1:8 As a sign of loyalty, numerous toasts were offered to the health and welfare of the king. After three years of rule, the king now felt very secure. Refusal to participate and drink to each toast did not offend him.

1:10 The seven eunuchs supervised the harem.

לֹא-תָבוֹא וְשָׂחִי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחִשָּׁרֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ
 לְרַעֲוִיתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מֵמִנָּה: כ וְנִשְׁמַע פֶּתַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה בְּכָל-
 מַלְכוּתוֹ כִּי רַבָּה הִיא וְכָל-הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן לְמַגְדֹּל וְעַד-
 קָטָן: כא וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּדִבְרֵ
 מַמְיֹכָן: כב וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפְרִים אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל- מְדִינָה
 וּמְדִינָה בְּכֹתֶבָה וְאֶל-עַם וְעַם כָּלשׁוֹנוֹ לֵהָיוֹת כָּל-אִישׁ שֹׁרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ
 וּמִדָּבָר כְּלִשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ: ס

פֶּרֶק ב'

ב א אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כָּשָׁךְ חִמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחִשָּׁרֹשׁ זָכַר אֶת-
 וְשָׂחִי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ: ב וַיֹּאמְרוּ גְּעִרֵי-
 הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו יִבְקָשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ גְּעִרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מִרְאֶה:

2:1 The now sober king was despondent at the loss of his queen, Vashti. The advisors were fearful that the king would accuse them of offering the wrong advice. So they decided to divert the king with a beauty contest to choose a new queen.



20. When the king's decision is publicized, wives throughout the kingdom will not rebel against their husbands and will treat them with more respect."

21. The king and his advisors were pleased with the suggestion, so Ah-chash-ver-osh followed Memuchan's advice.

22. The king sent orders to every one of his provinces, each in its language and script, directing that all husbands were to be masters of their homes.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Sometime later, when King Ah-chash-ver-osh calmed down, he realized how severely Vashti had been punished in relation to what she had done.

2. To quiet him, his advisors suggested, "Let us search for the most beautiful girls in the kingdom;

1:22 At that time there were several official languages in Persia: Elamite, Babylonian, Aramaic, and, of course, Persian.

Official documents were recorded in Persian and then translated into the language or dialect of the people for whom the communication was intended.



ג וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת מְלָכוֹתָיו וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת־כָּל־
 גַּעֲרָה־כְּתוּלָה טוֹבַת מְרָאָה אֶל־שׁוּשַׁן הַבִּיָּרָה אֶל־בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־יָד
 הַגָּא סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים וְנֹתָן תַּמְרָקִיָּהוּ: ד וַהֲנַעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר
 חִיטָּב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תַּמָּלֹךְ תַּחַת וְשָׂתִי וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּכָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: ה אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּיָּרָה וּשְׁמוֹ מָרְדֳּכָי בֶּן־אִיִּר
 בֶּן־שֹׁמְעַי בֶּן־קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי: ו אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה מִירוּשָׁלַם עַם־הַגָּלָה
 אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָה עִם יְכֹנָיָה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה גְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ
 בָּבֶל: ז וַיְהִי אֲמֹן אֶת־הַדֹּשָׁה הִיא אֲסֻתָּר בַּת־דָּדֹי כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאָם
 וַהֲנַעֲרָה יַפֹּת־חֹאֵר וְטוֹבַת מְרָאָה וּבָמֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאָמָה לְקַחָהּ מָרְדֳּכָי
 לוֹ לְבַת: ח וַיְהִי בְּהַשְׁמַע רַב־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ וּבְהַקְבֵּץ נַעֲרוֹת רַבּוֹת
 אֶל־שׁוּשַׁן הַבִּיָּרָה אֶל־יָד הַגִּי וְתַלְקַח אֲסֻתָּר אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־יָד
 הַגִּי שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים: ט וַחֲיִטָּב הַנַּעֲרָה בְּעֵינָיו וַתֵּשֶׂא חֹסֵד לִפְנָיו וַיְבָהֵל
 אֶת־תַּמְרוּקִיָּה וְאֶת־מְנוּחָה לְתַח לָהּ וְאֶת שְׁבַע הַנַּעֲרוֹת הָרְאיוֹת
 לְתַח־לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁנֶנָּה וְאֶת־נַעֲרוֹתֶיהָ לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים:
 י לֹא־הִגִּידָה אֲסֻתָּר אֶת־עַמָּהּ וְאֶת־מִוְלָדָתָהּ כִּי מָרְדֳּכָי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִגִּיד: יא וּבְכָל־יּוֹם יוֹם מָרְדֳּכָי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֲצַר בֵּית־
 הַנָּשִׁים לְדַעַת אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אֲסֻתָּר וּמַה־יַּעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ: יב וּבְהִגָּעַת חַר
 גַּעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה לְכוּא: יג אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ מִקֵּץ הַיּוֹת לָהּ בְּדַת
 הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי כֵן יִמְלְאוּ יְמֵי מְרוּקִיָּהוּ שְׁשֶׁה חֳדָשִׁים
 בְּשֶׁמֶן הַמֶּר וְשֵׁשֶׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׁמֵים וּבְתַמְרוּקֵי הַנָּשִׁים: יד וּבָזָה

2:8 "Esther was taken," she did not go of her own free will.

2:10 Esther conducted herself with dignity, even in difficult situations, as Mordechi had taught her. Being taken to the palace and being chosen by Achashverosh were the challenges of her life.

2:10 The rabbis suggest that Esther did not reveal her origin so that she could secretly observe the Sabbath and the mitzvot.

2:10 Why did Mordechi advise Esther to hide her Jewishness? Perhaps to deflect from her the hate and distrust which Persians held for foreigners, especially Jews.

2:13 The chosen girl spent the whole night with the king.

3. Let the king send beauty scouts throughout the kingdom who will bring pretty, unmarried girls to the king's harem in Shushan, to Hegai, the harem keeper, who will dress them in royal clothing and beautify them.

4. And the girl whom the king chooses will become queen in place of Vashti." This plan pleased the king and he approved it.

5. There was a Jew in Shushan named Mordechi, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjaminites;

6. Mordechi had been carried into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who were exiled with Jeconiah, the king of Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

7. Mordechi raised Hadassah, whose Hebrew name was Esther, his cousin, for she had no father and mother; Mordechi adopted beautiful Esther as his own daughter.

8. When the king's order was publicized, many beautiful young girls were brought to the king's harem in Shushan and placed in Hegai's care. Esther was taken into the palace, and placed under the care of Hegai, the keeper of the harem.

9. She made an excellent impression upon Hegai; so he rushed her beauty treatment and gave her seven servants and the best apartment in the harem.

10. Esther followed Mordechi's instructions and told no one that she was Jewish.

11. Meantime, Mordechi was worried about Esther. Each day he stationed himself near the harem to find out what was happening to her.

12. Before the girls were paraded before King Ah-chach-ver-osh, they were given a full year of beauty treatments.

13. The girl who came before the king was dressed in special clothing and jewels.

2:5 Our sages say that Kish was the father of King Saul. The generations between Kish and Mordechi are not mentioned. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the Philistine king captured by Saul and killed by Samuel.

2:5 This is the first of the four verses said aloud in the synagogue by the congregation during the reading of the Megillah.

2:6 After months of strenuous fighting, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia captured Jerusalem in 581 B.C.E. King Jeconiah, the royal household, a portion of the upper class, and numerous craftsmen were marched off as captives to Babylonia.

2:7 The Hebrew name Hadassah means "myrtle." Her Babylonian name, Esther, is perhaps derived from the Babylonian goddess "Ishtar."

הַנְּעִרָה בָּאָה אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר יִנָּתֵן לָהּ לִבְּוֹא עִמָּה
מִבֵּית הַנָּשִׁים עַד-בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: יי בַּעֲרֹב | הִיא בָּאָה וּבִבְקָר הִיא שָׁבָה
אֶל-בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנֵי אֶל-יָד שֶׁעָשְׂגוּ סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר הַפִּילִגְשִׁים
לֹא-תָבוֹא עוֹד אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אִם- חֲפִיץ בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִקְרָאָה בָּשָׂם:
טו וּבַהֲגִיעַ תֶּרֶ-אֶסְתֵּר בַּת-אֲבִיתָיִל | יד מְרֹדְכִי אֲשֶׁר לָקַח-לוֹ לְבַת
לִבְּוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא בִקְשָׁה דְּבָר כִּי אִם אֶת-אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הִגִּי סָרִיס-
הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר הַנָּשִׁים וְתִהְיֶי אֶסְתֵּר נִשְׂאֵת חֵן בְּעֵינֵי כָל-רָאִיָּה:
טז וַתִּלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שֹׁרֹשׁ אֶל-בֵּית מַלְכוּתוֹ בַּחֲדָשׁ
הַעֲשִׁירִי הוּא | חֲדָשׁ טַבַּת בְּשַׁנַּת-שִׁבְעַ לְמַלְכוּתוֹ: יז וַיֵּאָהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל-הַנָּשִׁים וַתִּשְׂאֵת וַתִּסְדֹּק לִפְנֵי מִכָּל-הַבְּתוּלוֹת וַיִּשָּׂם
כְּתֹרֶת-מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשָׁהּ וַיְמַלִּכָהּ תַּחַת וְשֵׁתִי: יח וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה
גָּדוֹל לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֶת מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר וַהֲנִיחָהּ לְמַדִּינֹת עֲשֵׂה
וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׂאֵת פֶּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ: יט וּבַהֲקֻבֵּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנִית וּמְרֹדְכִי יֹשֵׁב
בְּשַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: כ אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מַגִּדַת מוֹלַדְתָּהּ וְאֶת-עַמָּהּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
עָלֶיהָ מְרֹדְכִי וְאֶת-מֶאֱמַר מְרֹדְכִי אֶסְתֵּר עֲשֵׂה כְּאֲשֶׁר הִנִּיתָה בְּאִמְנָה



14. She was brought to the king in the evening and in the morning was placed in the second harem where the king's wives lived. The second harem was in the charge of Shaashgaz. That girl never saw the king again unless he wished for her and especially called for her by name.

15. When Esther's turn came, she asked for nothing special except what Hegai, the keeper of the harem, had advised. Everyone in the harem was dazzled by Esther.

16. And Esther was brought to king Ah-chash-ver-osh, to his palace, in the tenth month, the month of Tevet, in the seventh year of his reign.

17. The king loved Esther more than anyone and he crowned her queen in place of Vashti.

18. The king made a great big feast for all his princes and advisors in honor of Esther; Ah-chash-ver-osh distributed numerous gifts and cancelled many taxes.

19. When the beautiful girls were assembled for the second time, Mordechi was sitting near the king's gate.

20. She did not tell anyone that she was Jewish. Even though she was a queen, Esther continued to follow Mordechi's instructions.

2:14 The girls who were not chosen by the king remained in the royal harem for the rest of their lives.

2:15 Esther trusted and relied upon the advice of the eunuch Hegai.



אָתּוּ: ס כּא בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּמָרְדֳּכָי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ קִצֹּץ בְּגָדָם
וַתֵּרֶשׁ שְׂגִי-סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמַרְי הַסֹּף וַיִּבְקֶשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחֻשׁוֹרֶשׁ: כב וַיִּזְדַּע הַדָּבָר לְמָרְדֳּכָי וַיִּגַּד לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר
אַסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בַּשָּׂם מָרְדֳּכָי: כג וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׂגִיָּהֶם
עַל-עֵץ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ס

פֶּרֶק ג'

ג א אַחֲרֵי | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחֻשׁוֹרֶשׁ אֶת-הַמֶּן בֶּן-
הַמִּדְבָּתָא הָאֲגָגִי וַיּוֹשָׁאֵהוּ וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת-כְּסָאוֹ מַעַל כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר
אָתּוּ: ב וְכַל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּרָעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים
לְהַמֶּן כִּי-בֶן צוּה-לּוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמָרְדֳּכָי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה:
ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמָרְדֳּכָי מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר
אֶת מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ד וַיְהִי בְּאַמְרָם (כּאמֶרם קרי) אֵלָיו יוֹם יוֹם וְלֹא
שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגְדּוּ לְהַמֶּן לִרְאוֹת הַנַּעֲמָדוֹ דְּבָרֵי מָרְדֳּכָי כִּי-הִגִּיד
לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יְהוּדִי: ה וַיֵּרָא הַמֶּן כִּי-אֵין מָרְדֳּכָי כָּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
לּוֹ וַיִּמְלֹא הַמֶּן חֲמָה: ו וַיִּבּוּ בַּעֲיָנָיו לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמָרְדֳּכָי לְבִדּוֹ כִּי-
הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת-עַם מָרְדֳּכָי וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמֶּן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מַלְכוּת אֲחֻשׁוֹרֶשׁ עִם מָרְדֳּכָי: ז בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא-
חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתִּים עָשָׂרָה לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחֻשׁוֹרֶשׁ הַפִּיל פּוֹר הוּא
הַגּוֹרָל לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן מִיּוֹם | לַיּוֹם וּמַחֲדָשׁ לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ
אַדָּר: ס ה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחֻשׁוֹרֶשׁ יִשְׁנֻ עִם-אַחֵד מִפְּנֵי
וּמִפְּנֵי בֵין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלָכֵיהֶם וַיַּחֲתִימֵם שְׁנוֹת מְכַל-עַם

3:4 The king's servants tried to impress Mordechi with the seriousness of his crime, but Mordechi persists and refuses to bow down.

3:4 The palace gate was a very busy thoroughfare, and Haman apparently did not notice Mordechi. Now the other officials bring Mordechi's offense to Haman's attention.

3:7 The Jews adopted the Babylonian names for the months of the year. Even the names "Mordechi" and "Esther" are Babylonian.

3:8 Notice that Haman did not tell the king that his victims were to be the Jews.

3:8 Haman's accusations were false. Rabbinic law instructs Jews to obey the rules of the host country. "The civil laws of the country in which you live are valid as law."

21. One day, as Mordechi was sitting at the palace gate, two rebellious officers, Bigthan and Theresh, were plotting to kill the king.

22. Mordechi got wind of the plot, told Esther about the plot and Esther immediately told the king in Mordechi's name.

23. The plotters were questioned and they confessed. The plotters were then executed, and the details of this incident were officially recorded in the king's historical records.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Sometime later, King Ah-chash-ver-osh promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to prime minister.

2. The king ordered everyone to honor and to bow down to Haman. Everyone bowed down except Mordechi.

3. The king's servants asked Mordechi, "Aren't you afraid to disobey the king's order?"

4. Day after day the officials continued to warn him but Mordechi still refused. They agitated Haman about Mordechi to see whether Mordechi the Jew would prevail.

5. Haman was very furious because Mordechi the Jew was the only one who refused to bow down to him.

6. When Haman learned that Mordechi was Jewish, he decided to punish him as well as all the Jews in the kingdom.

7. In the twelfth year of the reign of Ah-chash-ver-osh — in the month of Nissan — lots (*pur*) were cast by Haman, to choose the day and the month for a pogrom; the month of Adar was chosen.

8. Then Haman slyly said to Ah-chash-ver-osh, "There is a group of people scattered throughout your kingdom whose customs are different from everyone else's and who do not obey the king's laws. It doesn't make any sense to tolerate them.

2:21 Why would the Persians allow Mordechi to sit in or near the King's Gate? Esther, as a sign of gratitude to Uncle Mordechi, probably arranged to have him appointed to an official position, and thus he was allowed to "sit in the King's Gate."

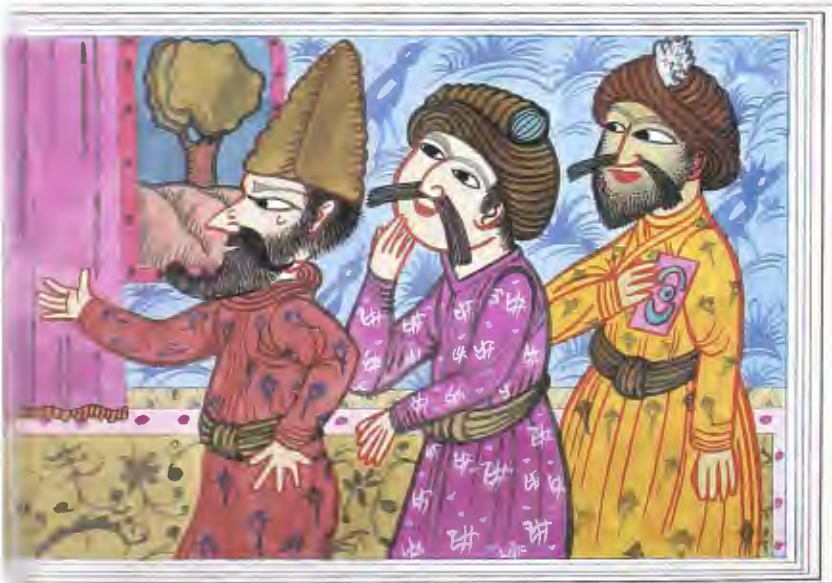
3:3 The writers of the Megillah describe a confrontation between two old enemies. Saul, the king of the Hebrews, is represented by his descendant, Mordechi. Agag, king of the Amalekites, is represented by his descendant, Haman.

וְאֶת־דְּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלִמְלֶכֶךְ אֵין־שׁוֹה לְהַנִּיחָם: ט אִם־עַל־
הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדָּם וְעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים כֶּבֶד־כֶּסֶף אֲשָׁקוּל עַל־יְדֵי
עֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה לְהָבִיא אֶל־גִּזְיֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: י וְיִסֵּד הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבְעָתוֹ
מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְהֵמָן בֶּן־הַמַּדְחָא הָאֶגְגִּי צִרְרֵי הַיְּהוּדִים: יא וַיֹּאמֶר
הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֵמָן הַכֶּסֶף נָתַן לְךָ וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ:
יב וַיִּקְרָאוּ סִפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּשָׁלוּשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ
וַיִּכְתֹּב כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה הֵמָן אֶל אַחֲשֶׁדְרָפְגִּי־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל־הַפָּחוֹת
אֲשֶׁר ׀ עַל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֶל־שָׂרֵי עָם וְעַם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה בְּכַתְּבָהּ
וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שׁוֹנֵי בָשָׂם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֶׁר־נִכְתָּב וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבְעָת

Under the Nazis, wealthy Jewish homes, factories, businesses, and art treasures became the personal property of the ruling Nazi clique. The mob got the leftovers.

3:10 The king had complete trust in Haman's judgment. He did not inquire as to the identity of his victims.

3:12 Haman was a sadist and wished to prolong the agony of the Jews. So he published his decree eleven months in advance.



9. I will be able to pay the treasury 10,000 silver talents if you will issue a decree that they be destroyed."

10. The king agreed and gave his signet ring to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, with which to seal and sign the order.

11. The king said to Haman, "You can keep the money and still have my permission to do anything you want with them."

12. In the first month, on the thirteenth day, Haman dictated orders to all governors and princes, to every province

3:9 The destruction of the Jews will be an object lesson to the other conquered subjects in the kingdom who dare defy Persian rule.

3:9 Haman offered 10,000 talents of silver for permission to kill the Jews. In today's money it would amount to about \$20,000,000, and perhaps much, much more. This enormous sum was a leverage rub-out. The Jews were a well-to-do class of people in the Persian Empire. Their property and wealth would make the pogrom into a very profitable, though bloody, "cash cow."

How could Haman possibly kill all of them, collect their property, and recoup his \$20,000,000 investment? In all probability, Haman, second to the king, had a group of soldiers under his personal command. The storm troopers would do the killing and then collect the property of the victims for Haman's personal treasury.



הַמֶּלֶךְ: יֵג וְנִשְׁלַח סִפָּרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ
 לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים מִנֶּעֱר מִנֶּעֱר וְעַד-זָקֵן טָף וְנָשִׁים
 בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנֵים-עָשָׂר הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר
 וּשְׁלָלָם לְבוֹז: יִפְתָּשֶׁגֶן הַפֶּתַח לְהַנָּתֵן דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי
 לְכָל-הָעַמִּים לְהֵיוֹת עֹתִידִים לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: טו הָרָצִים יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים
 בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָרַת נַתָּה בְּשׁוֹשֵׁן הַבִּירָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֶן יֵשְׁבוּ לַשְׁתֹּת
 וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֵׁן גְּבוּכָה: ס

פֶּרֶק ד'

ד א וּמְרֹדְכִי יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גִּעְשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מְרֹדְכִי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו
 וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׁק וְאָפֹר וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק וַעֲקָה גְדוּלָּה וּמְרָה:
 ב וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד לַפָּנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לָבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבּוֹשׁ
 שָׁק: ג וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר רָבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ
 אָבֵל גְּדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וְצוּם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפַּד שָׁק וְאָפֹר יָצַע לְרַבִּים:
 ד וַתָּבוֹאוּנָה (וַחֲבוּאנָה קרי) גַּעְרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסָהּ וַיִּגִּדּוּ לָהּ וַתַּחַלְחַל
 הַמֶּלֶכָה מְאֹד וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת-מְרֹדְכִי וּלְהַסִּיר שָׁקוֹ
 מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא קִבֵּל: ה וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתָּךְ מִסָּרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר
 הָעֵמִיד לִפְנֶיהָ וַתַּצְוֶהוּ עַל-מְרֹדְכִי לְדַעַת מַה-זֶּה וְעַל-מַה-זֶּה: ו וַיֵּצֵא
 הַתָּךְ אֶל-מְרֹדְכִי אֶל-רְחוֹב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: ז וַיִּגְדֵּל-לוֹ
 מְרֹדְכִי אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרְהוּ וְאֵת פֶּרֶשֶׁת הַפָּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָמֶן
 לְשָׁקוֹל עַל-גִּגְיֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּיְּהוּדִים (בַּיְּהוּדִים קרי) לְאַבְדָּם: ח וְאֶת-פֶּתִישֶׁגֶן
 קַתָּב-הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשֵׁן לְהַשְׁמִידם גָּמַן לוֹ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר
 וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצִוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לָבֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ
 מִלִּפְנֵי עַל-עַמָּה: ט וַיָּבֹאוּ הַתָּךְ וַיִּגְדּוּ לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת רַבְּרֵי מְרֹדְכִי:

3:15 All the residents of Shushan were in a turmoil. Now, for no reason, Haman and his band of murderers had received permission to kill the Jews. When they finished with the Jews, whom would they attack next?

4:1 Wearing sackcloth and ashes is a traditional rite of expressing grief and mourning.

in its own script and every people in its own language; the order was written and sealed with the king's own signet ring.

13. Runners carried the decree of extermination to all the provinces in the kingdom. All Jews were included in it; young and old, children and women were to be killed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of Adar and were to be plundered of all their possessions.

14. This order was to be publicized in all the provinces so that the people would be prepared to carry out the decree at the appointed time.

15. At the king's command, the runners raced away and the extermination order was first posted in Shushan, the capital. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink while the city of Shushan fell into panic and confusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. When Mordechi became aware of all that had taken place, he went into mourning, tore his clothing, put on sackcloth and began to weep and moan.

2. No one in mourning was allowed in the king's palace, so Mordechi stood outside the palace gate.

3. All the Jews throughout the kingdom were in mourning, fasting and weeping, and the Jews wore sackcloth and ashes in public.

4. Esther was very distressed when her maids informed her that Mordechi was in sackcloth and ashes; so she sent new clothing to Mordechi, which he refused.

5. Then Esther sent Hathach, whom the king had appointed to serve her, to find out what the problem was.

6. Hathach found Mordechi outside the palace gates.

7. Mordechi told Hathach about the extermination decree and about the money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury for the right to destroy the Jews.

8. Mordechi gave Hathach a copy of the decree and asked him to show it to Esther; and to tell her to plead with the king to save her people from extermination.

9. Hathach told Esther what Mordechi had said.

3:13 Official letters, written on papyrus, were tied with a ribbon or a piece of string. Then a lump of wet clay or wax was placed over the knot and sealed and stamped with a signet ring.

• ותאמר אסתר להתד וּתצוהו אל-מֶרְדֵּכָי: יא כֹּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם
 מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יָדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר-יָבֹוא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֶל-הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרָא אֶתָּה דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית לְבָר מֵאֲשֶׁר
 יוֹשִׁיט-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שֶׁרְבִיט הַזָּהָב וְחָזָה וְאִנִּי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבֹא
 אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם: יב וַיִּגִּדּוּ לְמֶרְדֵּכָי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר:
 יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֵּכָי לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-אֶסְתֵּר אֶת-תְּדֻמִּי בְּנִפְשׁוֹ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית-
 הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים: יד כִּי אִם-הִתְחַרַּשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בַּעַת הַזֹּאת בְּרוּחַ
 וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר וְאַתָּה וּבִית-אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי
 יוֹדֵעַ אִם-לָעַת כָּזֹאת הִנָּצֵף לַמְּלָכוֹת: טו וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-
 מֶרְדֵּכָי: טז לֵךְ כְּנוּס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְצֻמוּ עִלַּי
 וְאֶל-תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לֵילָה יוֹם גַּם-אֲנִי וְנִעְרֹתַי
 אֲצֻם כֵּן וּבִבְנֵי אָבִיאוֹ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כֹדֶת וּכְאֲשֶׁר אֲבָדְתִּי
 אֲבָדְתִּי: יז וַיַּעֲבֹר מֶרְדֵּכָי וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוְתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר:

4:16 Esther, her servants and the Jews of Persia fast for three days.

Jewish fasts such as Yom Kippur and Tisha B'av etc. are always accompanied by prayers. Although the Megillah contains no mention of God or prayer, the reliance on God is presumed by this act.



10. Esther sent Hathach back to Mordechi with the following message.

11. "Everyone knows that anyone who comes into the king's presence without a special invitation is put to death, unless the king holds out his golden scepter; and I have not even seen the king in the last month."

12. Hathach relayed Esther's message to Mordechi.

13. Then Mordechi sent this answer to Esther, "Do you for one second believe that just because you are a queen you will escape the extermination decree?"

14. If you do not intervene, I am positive that help for the Jews will come from somewhere else; but you and all your relatives will perish. I believe that you were specifically brought to this palace just for this emergency."

15. Then Esther sent this message to Mordechi.

16. "Gather together all the Jews in Shushan and fast for me for three days and three nights. I and my servants will also fast. In three days I will visit the king unannounced; and if I die, I die."

17. Mordechi left and did exactly as Esther had told him to do.

4:13 Eventually they will find out that you are Jewish and you too will be killed.

4:13 Mordechi firmly believed that Esther was chosen by God and placed in her influential position to save the Jews.



ה א וַיְהִי אֶבְיֹנִים הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מְלָכוּת וַתַּעֲמִד בַּחֲצַר
 בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית וְנֹכַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא מְלָכוּתוֹ
 בְּבֵית הַמְּלָכוּת וְכֹחַ פְּתוּחַ הַבַּיִת: ב וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר
 הַמִּלֻּכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בַּחֲצַר גִּשְׁאָה חֹן בְּעֵינֶיהָ וַיִּוָּשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת-
 שַׂרְבִּיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר וַתִּגַּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשַּׂרְבִּיט:
 ג וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה-לָּךְ אֶסְתֵּר הַמִּלֻּכָּה וּמַה-בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עַד-חֲצִי
 הַמִּלְכוּת וַיִּגְדֹּל לָךְ: ד וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְהָמֶן הַיּוֹם אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ: ה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה־רָּו
 אֶת-הָמֶן לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-דְּבַר אֶסְתֵּר וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֶן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה
 אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר: ו וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיּוֹם מַה-
 שְׂאֵלְךָ וַיִּגְדֹּל לָךְ וּמַה-בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עַד-חֲצִי הַמִּלְכוּת וַתַּעֲשׂ: ז וַתַּעַן
 אֶסְתֵּר וַתֹּאמֶר שְׂאֵלְתִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי: ח אִם-מִצָּאתִי חֹן בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְאִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לָתֵת אֶת-שְׂאֵלְתִי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-בִּקְשָׁתִי יָבוֹא
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֶן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָּהֶם וּמִתֵּר אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֵי
 הַמֶּלֶךְ: ט וַיֵּצֵא הָמֶן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׂמֹחַ וְטוֹב לֵב וּכְרָאוֹת הָמֶן אֶת-
 מֶרְדֳּכָי בַּשַּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וּלְאֶקֶם וּלְאִי־נָע מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּמְלֹא הָמֶן עַל-מֶרְדֳּכָי
 חֲמָה: י וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הָמֶן וַיָּבוֹא אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּבְא אֶת-אֲהֲבָיו וְאֶת-
 זָרֵשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ: יא וַיִּסְפֹּר לָהֶם הָמֶן אֶת-כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ וְרֹב בְּנָיו וְאֵת כָּל-
 אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ עַל-הַשָּׂרִיס וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 יב וַיֹּאמֶר הָמֶן אַף לֹא-הִכִּיָּאָה אֶסְתֵּר הַמִּלֻּכָּה עִם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-
 הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה כִּי אִם-אוֹתִי וְגַם-לְמִתֵּר אֲנִי קְרוֹא-לָהּ עִם-
 הַמֶּלֶךְ: יג וְכִלְיָהּ אֵינֶנּוּ שֹׁנֵה לִּי בְּכָל-עֵת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֶת-מֶרְדֳּכָי
 הַיְּהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בַּשַּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: יד וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ זָרֵשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל-אֲהֲבָיו
 יַעֲשׂוּ-עִץ גִּבֹּה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וּבִבְקָר וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת-מֶרְדֳּכָי
 עָלֶיהָ וְכָל עַם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה שְׂמֹחַ וַיִּיטֹב הַדָּבָר לְפָנֵי הָמֶן וַיַּעַשׂ
 הָעֵץ: ט

5:7 Esther decides that the time is not ripe to reveal her request. Perhaps she wishes to heighten the suspense.

5:8 "You have continually asked about my race and parentage. At the feast I will reveal my heritage."

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Three days later, Esther entered the throne room dressed in her royal robes.

2. When the king saw Esther, he held out his golden scepter and signaled her to approach. Esther approached and touched the tip of his scepter.

3. Then the king said to her: "Queen Esther, tell me what is bothering you? Even if you ask for half of my kingdom, it shall be yours."

4. And Esther said, "Your majesty, if the king agrees, let him and Haman come to a banquet which I have prepared."

5. And then the king said to his aides, "Hurry, bring Haman so we can attend Esther's banquet." The king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther prepared.

6. As the king was drinking his wine, he said, "Esther, tell me what is troubling you? Even if you ask for half of my kingdom, it shall be granted."

7-8. Then Esther answered and said, "If the king is pleased with me and if he wishes to grant my request, then let the King and Haman come to another banquet tomorrow. At this party I will explain my problem."

9. Haman left Esther's banquet a very happy man; but then he saw Mordechi at the king's gate and his joy turned to anger because, as usual, Mordechi did not bow down to him.

10. But Haman kept his composure and went home and sent for his friends and his wife, Zeresh.

11. Haman boasted to them about his riches, his many children and the honors which the king had bestowed upon him, and how he was now second to the king.

12. And Haman boasted: "Queen Esther even invited the king and I to a banquet in her palace. And tomorrow I will attend still another banquet in her palace."

13. But these honors mean nothing to me when I see Mordechi, the Jew, sitting in the gate of the king's palace."

14. Then his wife, Zeresh, and his friends said to him: "Build a gallows seventy feet high and in the morning ask the king to permit you to hang Mordechi from it; and then you will enjoy your banquet with the king and queen." This advice made sense to Haman and he ordered the gallows erected.

5:6 The king understood that Esther had something very specific in mind. So he says, "Now that we're together, tell me what you want, Esther."

ו א בלילה ההוא גרדה שנת המלך ויאמר להביא את-ספר הזכרונות דברי הימים ויהיו נקראים לפני המלך: ב וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי על-בגתנא ות'רש שני סריסי המלך משמרי הסף אשר בקשו לשלח יד במלך אחשוורוש: ג ויאמר המלך מה-נעשה יקר וגדולה למרדכי על-זה ויאמרו נערי המלך משרתיו לא-נעשה עמו דבר: ד ויאמר המלך מי בחצר והמן בא לחצר בית-המלך התיצונו לאמר למלך לתלות את-מרדכי על-העץ אשר-הכין לו: ה ויאמרו נערי המלך אליו הנה המן עמד בחצר ויאמר המלך יבוא: ו ויבוא המן ויאמר לו המלך מה-לעשות באיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו ויאמר המן בלבד למי יחפץ המלך לעשות יקר יותר

6:1 According to the Talmud, the following thought ran through the mind of Achashverosh: "Why is Esther inviting Haman? Are they conspiring against me to kill me?"

He thought again, "If so, is there no man who is my friend and who would tell me?" Then he thought again, "Perhaps there is some man who has done me a good turn and not been rewarded. That's why people refrain from informing me." Immediately, he commanded his servants to bring the Book of Chronicles.



CHAPTER SIX

1. That night the king could not sleep and he decided to read the historical records of his kingdom.

2. He read how Mordechi had discovered the assassination plot of Bigthan and Theresh, and saved the king's life.

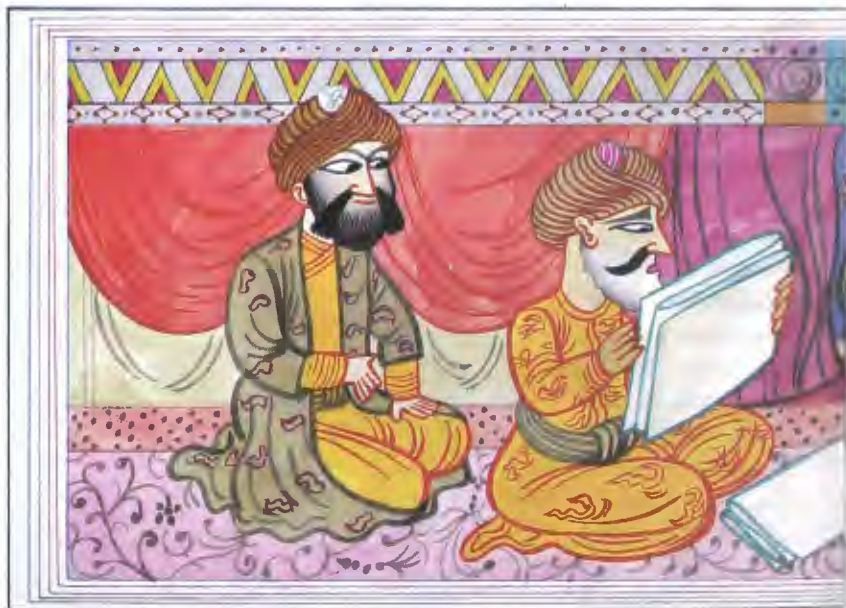
3. And the king said, "How have we rewarded Mordechi for saving my life?" And the king's aides replied, "Nothing has been done for him."

4. And the king continued, "Which of my officials are in the palace?" Now Haman had just arrived to ask the king to hang Mordechi on the gallows that he had just had built.

5. And the king's servants said, "Haman is in the palace." And the king said, "Bring him in immediately."

6. As Haman entered the king said to him, "What shall I do for a man whom I wish to honor?" And Haman thought: "I am the most important person in the kingdom. Of course, the king wants to honor me."

6:1 His secretaries were instructed to keep an accurate record of every significant event in the Persian Empire.



מִמֶּנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר הֵמָּן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ:
 ה יָבִיאוּ לְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לְבַשְׁבוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְסוּס אֲשֶׁר רָכַב עָלָיו
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֲשֶׁר נִתֵּן כְּתֹר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ: ט וְנָתַן הַלְבוּשׁ וְהַסּוּס עַל-
 יַד-אִישׁ מִשְׁרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרָתָמִים וְהַלְבֹּשׁוּ אֶת-הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וְהַרְפִּיבֵהוּ עַל-הַסּוּס בְּרִחוּב הָעִיר וְקִרְאוּ לִפְנֵיו בְּכָה
 יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ: י וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֵמָּן מִהֵרָ
 קַח אֶת-הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-הַסּוּס כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ וַעֲשֵׂה-כֵן לְמֶרְדֵּכִי הַיְּהוּדִי
 הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-תִּפְּל דָּבָר מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: יא וַיִּקַּח הֵמָּן
 אֶת-הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-הַסּוּס וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת- מֶרְדֵּכִי וַיַּרְפִּיבֵהוּ בְּרִחוּב הָעִיר
 וַיִּקְרָא לִפְנֵיו בְּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ: יב וַיֵּשֶׁב
 מֶרְדֵּכִי אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהֵמָּן נִדְחָף אֶל- בֵּיתוֹ אָבֵל וְחַפּוּי רֹאשׁ:
 יג וַיִּסְפֹּר הֵמָּן לְזֹרֵשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וּלְכָל-אֲהָבָיו אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְזֹרֵשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִנְּרַע הַיְּהוּדִים מֶרְדֵּכִי אֲשֶׁר הַחֲלוּתָהּ
 לְנִפְּל לִפְנֵיו לֹא-תוּכַל לוֹ כִּי-נִפּוּל תִּפּוּל לִפְנָיו: יד עוֹדֶם מְדַבְּרִים
 עִמּוֹ וְסָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הִגִּיעוּ וַיִּבְהִלוּ לְהִבְיֹא אֶת-הֵמָּן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה
 אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר:

6:13 At first, the friends advised Haman to hang Mordechi. Now they changed their advice and warned him about the danger of pulling out the rug from under the Persian Jews. Obviously, the Persian Jews were no easy pushovers.



7-8. Haman replied, "For the man whom the king wishes to honor, bring a royal robe which the king has worn and a horse which the king has ridden and place a royal crown on his head.

9. And instruct one of your nobles to enrobe the person whom the king wishes to honor and lead him on your horse through Shushan, proclaiming, 'This is the way the king honors those who serve him well.' "

10. Then the king said to Haman: "Hurry, take my royal robes and my horse and do exactly as you have suggested to Mordechi, the Jew who now sits in the palace gate."

11. And Haman robed Mordechi in the king's robes, mounted him on the king's horse and led him through the streets of Shushan shouting, "This is the way the king rewards those he wishes to honor."

12. Then Mordechi returned to his post at the palace gate and Haman sadly and shamefully crept back to his house.

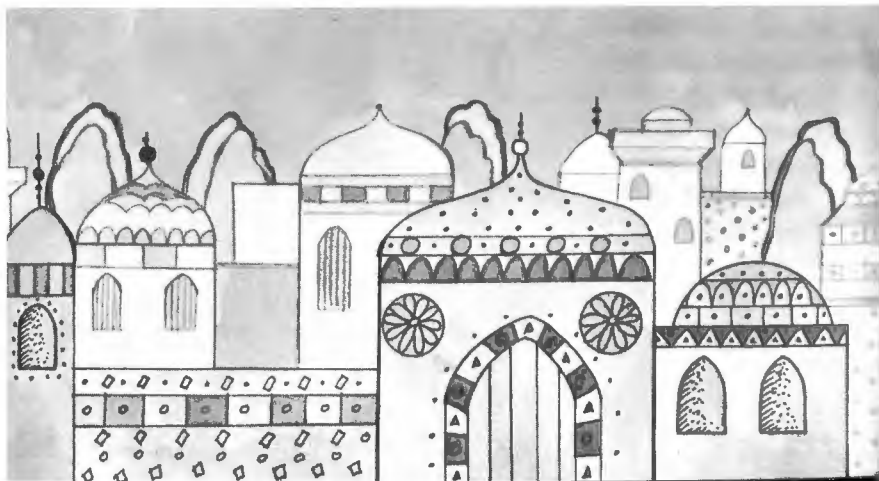
13. When Haman told his wife Zeresh and his friends what had happened, they warned him, "If Mordechi is a Jew, you will never defeat him once he has gotten the upper hand: in the end you yourself will have a great fall."

14. While they were talking, the king's guards arrived to escort him to Esther's banquet.

6:7 Notice that Haman did not mention the king's crown. The crown was a "no-no". Haman was cautious not to reveal his true intentions.

6:10 In the Persian Empire, as in most ancient monarchies, conspiracies and plots against reigning monarchs were frequent. It is not surprising that Persian rulers showered honors upon loyal followers, and especially those who saved their lives.

Xerxes (Ahashverosh) was assassinated in his bedroom by one of his aides. Interestingly enough, this conspiracy originated in the harem.

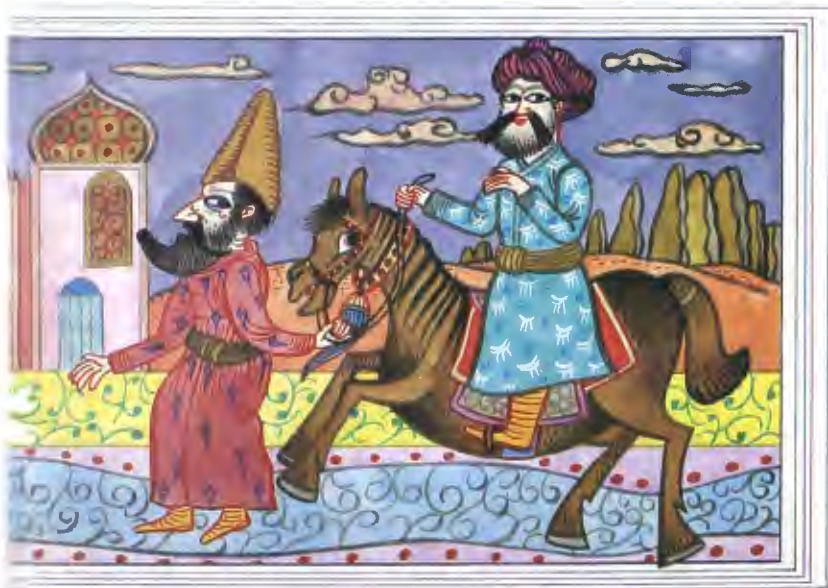


פֶּרֶק ז'

ז א וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֵן לַשְּׁתוּת עִם־אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה: ב וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 לְאֶסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁנִי בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן מִה־שָּׂאֵלְתְּךָ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
 וְחַנָּנְתְּ לָךְ וּמִה־בִקְשָׁתְךָ עַד־חֲצִי הַמַּלְכוּת וְחָעֵשׂ: ג וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר
 הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־מִצְאֵתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
 תִּתְּנֵנִי לִי בַּפֶּשֶׁל בְּשָׂאֵלְתִּי וְעַמִּי בְּבִקְשָׁתִּי: ד כִּי נִמְכְּרָנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי
 לְהִשָּׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד וְלֹאֵלּוּ לַעֲבָדִים וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְכְּרָנוּ הַחַרְשָׁתִּי
 כִּי אֵין הַצָּר שְׁנֵה בְּנוֹק הַמֶּלֶךְ: ה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֵׁרֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר
 לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאִי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מָלְאוּ לְבֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן:
 ו וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב הָמֵן הָרַע הִנֵּה וְהָמֵן נִבְעֹת מִלִּפְנֵי
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה: ז וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בְּחֶמְתּוֹ מִמִּשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן אֶל־גִּנַּת הַבַּיִת
 וְהָמֵן צָמַד לְבִקֵּשׁ עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי רָאָה כִּי־כָלְתָה אֵלָיו
 הָרָעָה מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ח וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁב מִגִּנַּת הַבַּיִת אֶל־בֵּית א מִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן

7:8 Achashverosh returned to the banquet and found Haman sprawled across Esther's couch begging for his life. The king now turned this scene to his own advantage and yelled, "Do you also want to rape my queen?"

Haman had many followers and they could cause severe political problems for the king. But as a rapist, even on a trumped-up charge, Haman could command no loyalties or followers.



CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The king and Haman came to Queen Esther's banquet.

2. Once again, the king asked Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? Even if you ask for one half of my kingdom, it shall be yours."

3. Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in the king's eyes, and if it pleases the king, save my life and the lives of my people."

4. For I and my people have been sold to those who wish to exterminate us. If we had been sold as slaves, I would have remained silent, but this decree will create many problems for the king."

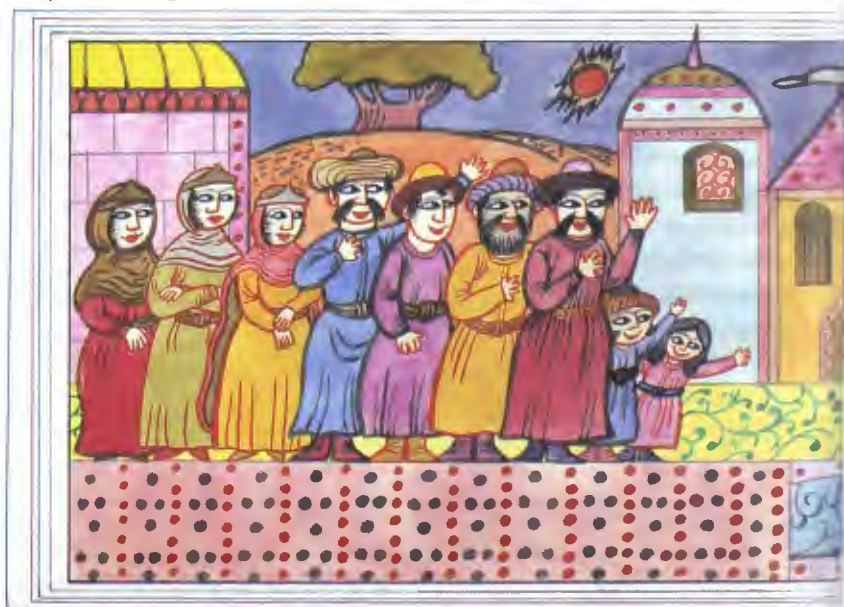
5. Then King Ah-chash-ver-osh said to Queen Esther: "Who is this evil schemer and where is he?"

6. And Queen Esther said: "There sits our enemy, wicked Haman." Haman trembled in terror before the king and queen.

7. The king arose in anger and went into the garden for some air, while Haman stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life, for he saw that his fate was sealed by the king.

7:4 Until this point Achashverosh was still unaware that Esther was a Jewess. Now he knew that the extermination order could also be applied to his beloved queen, Esther.

7:5 The word **וַיֹּאמֶר** ("he said") is repeated twice to indicate great respect for King Achashverosh.



והָמֶן נָפַל עַל־הַמִּטָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ הֲגַם לִכְבוֹשׁ
 אֶת־הַמֶּלֶכָה עִמִּי בַּבַּיִת הַדָּבָר יָצָא מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ וּפְנֵי הָמֶן חָפּוּ:
 ט וַיֹּאמֶר טָרְבוּנָה אֶחָד מִן־הַסָּרִיסִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ גַּם הִגֵּה־הָעֵץ
 אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָמֶן לְמִרְדֵּכִי אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר־טוֹב עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ עִמָּד בַּבַּיִת הָמֶן
 גָּבַהַ חֲמָשִׁים אַמָּה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּלְהוּ עָלָיו: • וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת־הָמֶן
 עַל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין לְמִרְדֵּכִי וַחֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכְכָה: ט

פָּרָק ח'

ח א בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָה אֶת־בַּיִת
 הָמֶן צֶרֶר הַיְּהוּדִים (הַיְּהוּדִים קרי) וּמִרְדֵּכִי בָּא לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־הִגִּידָה
 אֶסְתֵּר מָה הוּא־לָהּ: ב וַיִּסֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵבִיר מִהֶמֶן
 וַיִּתְּנָה לְמִרְדֵּכִי וַתִּשֶׂם אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־מִרְדֵּכִי עַל־בַּיִת הָמֶן: ג וַתּוֹסֶף
 אֶסְתֵּר וַתְּדַבֵּר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתַּפֵּל לִפְנֵי רַגְלָיו וַתִּכְנֶה וַתַּתְחַנֵּן־לוֹ
 לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת־רַעַת הָמֶן הָאֲגֹנִי וְאֵת מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל־
 הַיְּהוּדִים: ד וַיּוֹשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר אֵת שַׂרְבֵּט הַזֶּהָב וַתִּקֶּם אֶסְתֵּר

3. Haman initially did not tell the king that he wanted to kill the Jews of Persia. The Jews were no threat to Achashverosh since they had no political base of their own.

Wasn't it Mordechi the Jew who had saved his life? What other lies had Haman told him?

4. Achashverosh loved Esther. She was a Jewess. Would Haman kill her too?

Achashverosh quickly made his decision. When he went into the garden it was to tell his guards to prepare the death hood for Haman.

7:9 Haman has committed another misdeed against the king. He has constructed a gallows on which to hang Mordechi the Jew, the very same Mordechi who had saved the king's life.

8:1 Only special individuals and high officials were privileged to "come before the king."

8. When the king returned, he found Haman lying across the foot of Esther's couch where she was reclining. The king roared, "This evil man intends to rape my queen in my own palace right in front of my eyes." As the king spoke, his guards covered Haman's head.

9. Then Harbona, one of the aides, said, "Sire, the gallows which Haman has constructed for Mordechi stands in his courtyard." "Hang Haman on his own gallows," ordered the king.

10. So they hung Haman on the gallows which he had constructed for Mordechi, and the king's anger was cooled.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. On that day, King Ah-chash-ver-osh gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Esther the Queen. Mordechi was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king what he was to her.

2. The king gave his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordechi; Esther appointed Mordechi supervisor in charge of Haman's estate.

3. Once again Esther came before the king and begged him to stop the extermination plot against the Jews.

4. The king raised his golden scepter, and Esther arose and stood before the king.

7:8 Achashverosh cleverly sorted out the evidence against Haman and decided that he was a threat to his crown and also to his beloved Esther.

1. Haman had unconsciously revealed his secret ambition to become king of Persia by suggesting that "the man whom the king wishes to honor" wear the king's clothing, and ride the king's horse.

2. Haman, second to the king, controlled an organization of strategically positioned storm troopers who were ready to kill the Jews. This army could also be used to overthrow the monarchy.

וַתַּעֲמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ה' וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב וְאִם-מִצָּאתִי תֵן
 לִפְנֵי וְכִשֶּׁר הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְּעֵינָיו יִכְתֹּב לְהָשִׁיב אֶת-
 הַסְּפָרִים מִחֻשְׁבֹּת הַמֶּן בֶּן-הַמִּדְיָא הָאֶנְגִּי אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לְאַבְדֹּת אֶת-
 הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מִדְיָנוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ו' כִּי אֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאִיתִי בְּרָעָה
 אֲשֶׁר-יִמְצָא אֶת-עַמִּי וְאֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאִיתִי בְּאַבְדֹּן מוֹלֶדְתִּי: ס
 וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשׁוּרֹשׁ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּלְמַרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי הַזֶּה
 בֵּית-הַמֶּן נִתְּתִי לְאַסְתֵּר וְאִתּוֹ מָלוּ עַל-הָעֵץ עַל אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יְדוֹ
 בַּיְּהוּדִיִּים (בִּיהוּדִים קרי): ח וְאַתֶּם כְּתֹבוּ עַל-הַיְּהוּדִים כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם
 בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחַתְמוּ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי-כָתַב אֲשֶׁר-נִכְתַּב בְּשֵׁם-הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין לְהָשִׁיב: ט וַיִּקְרָאוּ סְפָרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּעֲת-
 הַהִיא בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ סִינֹן בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים בּוֹ וַיִּכְתַּב
 כְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה מַרְדֳּכַי אֶל-הַיְּהוּדִים וְאֶל הָאַחֲשֻׁרְפָּנִים וְהַפְּחוֹת

8:5 The king's decree could not be altered. To alter the king's decree
 would call his wisdom into question.



5. Esther said, "If it pleases the king, and if you love me, send out a decree reversing Haman's order to exterminate the Jews in all the provinces of the king.

6. How can I look on while my people are being butchered?"

7. Then King Ah-chash-ver-osh said to Queen Esther and Mordechi the Jew, "I have already given Haman's estate to Esther and have hanged him because he tried to destroy your people.

8. Now, I authorize you and Mordechi to issue new orders regarding the Jews and to seal your decree with my signet ring and in my name; for any decree with the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked."

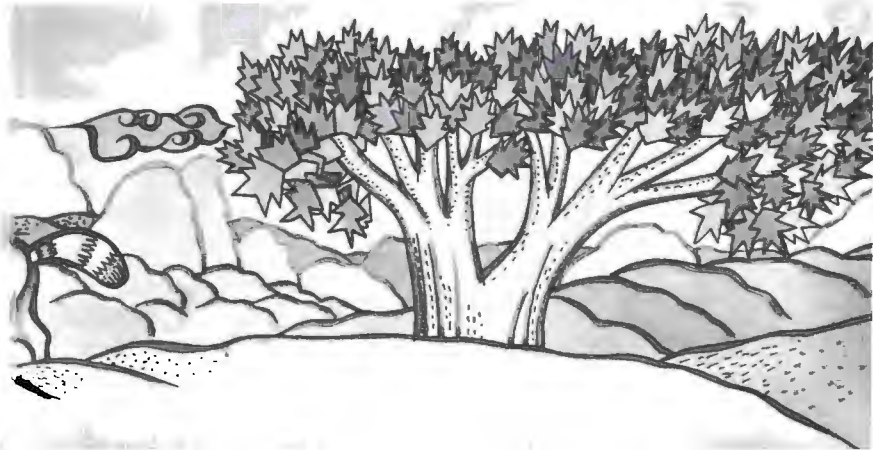
9. Immediately, the king's secretaries were summoned, and on the twenty-third day of the month of Sivan, a decree dictated by Mordechi was sent to the Jews and the governors and princes of the provinces. From India to Ethiopia — one hundred and twenty-seven in all, this decree was written in many languages.

8:5 The king's decree could not be revoked, but decrees by other officials could be changed. Esther subtly suggests that the extermination order was decreed by Haman and therefore could be revoked.



וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת אֲשֶׁר | מֵהֵדוּ וְעַד-כּוֹשׁ שִׁבְעַת וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה
 מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כִּכְתָּבָה וְעַם וְעַם כָּלִשְׁנָו וְאֶל-הַיְּהוּדִים כִּכְתָּבָם
 וְכָלִשְׁנָם: • וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וַיַּחֲתֵם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפָרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים בְּסוּסִים רַכְבֵּי הָרָכָשׁ הָאֲחַשְׁתָּרְנִים בְּנֵי
 הַרְמָקִים: יא אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיהוּדִים | אֲשֶׁר | בְּכָל-עִיר וְעִיר
 לְהַקְהֵל וּלְעֲמֹד עַל-נַפְשָׁם לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגׁ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת-כָּל-חַיִּל עַם
 וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֹתָם טָף וְנָשִׁים וּשְׁלָלָם לְבוֹז: יב בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּכָל-
 מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ בְּשִׁלוּשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנִים-עָשָׂר הוּא-
 חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר: יג פָּתְשָׁנָן הַכֹּתֵב לְהַגִּתָּן דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי
 לְכָל-הָעַמִּים וְלִהְיוֹת הַיְּהוּדִיִּים עֲתוּדִים (הַיְּהוּדִים עֲמִידִים קְרִי) לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
 לְהִנָּקֵם מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם: יד הָרָצִים רַכְבֵּי הָרָכָשׁ הָאֲחַשְׁתָּרְנִים יֵצְאוּ
 מִבְּהֵלִים וּדְחוּפִים בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וַהֲדַת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה: ט
 וּמֶרְכָבֵי יֵצְאוּ | מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבוֹשׁ מַלְכוּת תִּכְלַת נְחוֹר וְעֻטְרַת
 זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה וּתְכָרִיד בּוֹץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשָׁן צָהֳלָה וּשְׁמַחָה:
 טו לַיהוּדִים הִיתָה אוֹרָה וּשְׁמַחָה וְשׁוֹשָׁן וַיִּקְרָ: יז וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה
 וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל-עִיר וְעִיר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַדָּתוֹ מִלִּצֵּעַ שְׁמַחָה
 וְשׁוֹשׁוֹן לַיהוּדִים מִשְׁתָּה יוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מִצְמִי הָאָרֶץ מִתְּנַהֲדִים כִּי-
 נָפַל פָּחַד-הַיְּהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

8:15–16 These are the second and third verses said aloud in the synagogue by the congregation during the reading of the Megillah.



10. Mordechi wrote the order in the name of King Achash-ver-osh and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and the order was carried by speedy riders on horses, camels and mules.

11. The king allowed the Jews to band together, to defend themselves, and to destroy those who would attack and rob them, also their children and their women, and to take their possessions.

12. Mordechi's decree was to take effect on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar.

13. The order was to be publicized to all the people and enforced in every province, so that the Jews could avenge themselves against their enemies.

14. Messengers rushed out on speedy horses at the king's command and the decree was also published in the capital, Shushan.

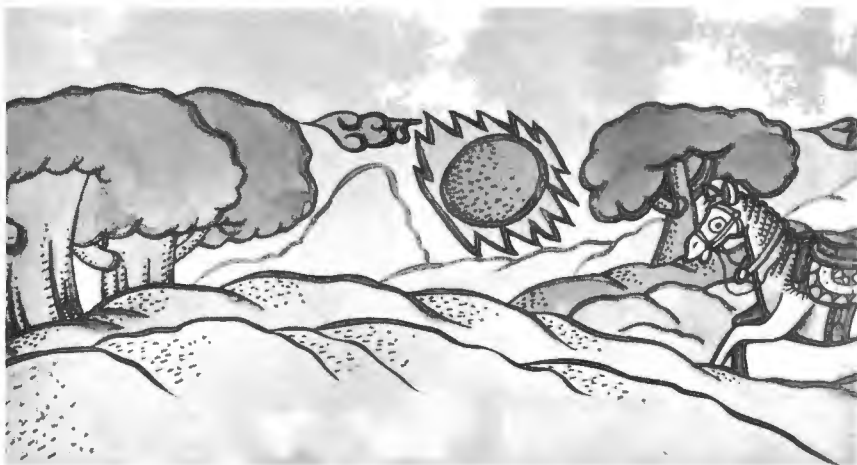
15. Mordechi left the king's presence dressed in royal blue and white robes, a golden crown and a cape of purple linen, while the city of Shushan celebrated joyfully.

16. Now there was light and joy, gladness and honor for the Jews of Persia.

17. In every city, as soon as the king's decree arrived, the Jews declared a holiday, filled with joy and gladness: and many of the people converted to Judaism, since they did not want to be harmed.

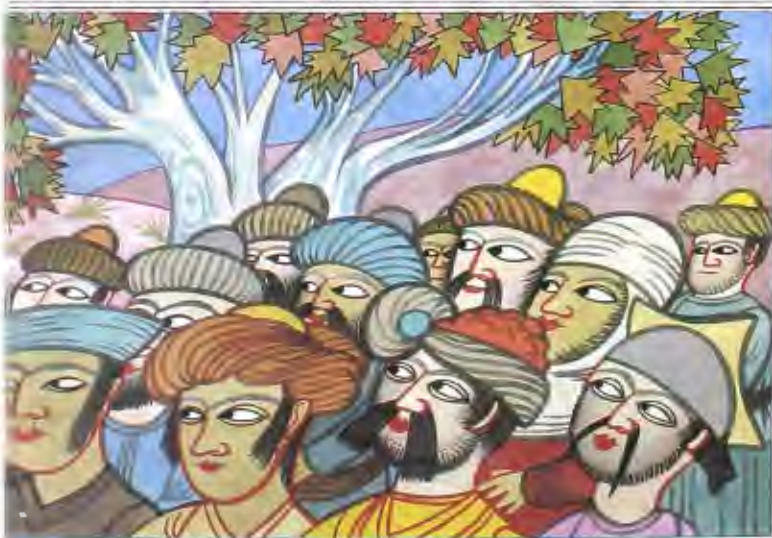
8:10 The efficient control of the far-flung Persian Empire depended upon an effective and efficient communication network. The Persians operated a "pony express" delivery service. The couriers relayed the mail from station to station, where the changeover of animals and riders took place.

8:11 Under Persian law, Achashverosh could not rescind his first extermination decree. So he issued a new decree permitting the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies.



ט א ובשנים עשר חדש הוא-חדש אדר בשלושה עשר יום בו אשר הגיע דבר-המלך ודתו להעשות ביום אשר שברו איבי היהודים לשלוט בהם ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאיהם: ב ונקלו היהודים בעריהם בכל-מדינות המלך אחשוורוש לשלח לך במבקשי רעתם ואיש לא-עמד בפניהם כי נפל פתחם על-כל העמים: ג וכל-שרי המדינות והאחשוורפנים והפחות ועשי המלאכה אשר למלך מנשאים את-היהודים כי-נפל פחד-מרדכי עליהם: ד כי-גדול מרדכי בבית המלך ושמועו הולך בכל-המדינות כי-האיש מרדכי הולך וגדול: ה ויבו היהודים בכל-איביהם מפת-תרכ והרג ואבקו ויעשו בשנאיהם פרצונם: ו ובששון הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד חמש מאות איש: ז ואת פרשנכתא ואת דלפון ואת אספתא: ח ואת פורתא ואת אדליא ואת ארידתא: ט ואת פרמשתא ואת אריסי ואת ארידי ואת נמחא: י עשרת בני המן בן-המכתא צר היהודים הרגו ובבזה לא

Rabbi Johanan said, "The vav of Vaizatha must be lengthened like a boat-pole, since they were all hanged together on one long pole."



CHAPTER NINE

1. And on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month — Adar — the day the enemies of the Jews had chosen for their extermination, the opposite happened, and now the Jews were victorious.

2. The Jews in all the provinces of King Ah-chash-ver-osh gathered together to avenge themselves against their enemies and no one opposed them because they were afraid.

3. And all the government officials elevated the Jews to high office because they feared Mordechi.

4. Mordechi had much influence and power in the palace and his fame was growing.

5. And the Jews defeated all their foes by the sword, destroying their enemies.

6. The Jews defeated their enemies and killed 500 enemies in Shushan.

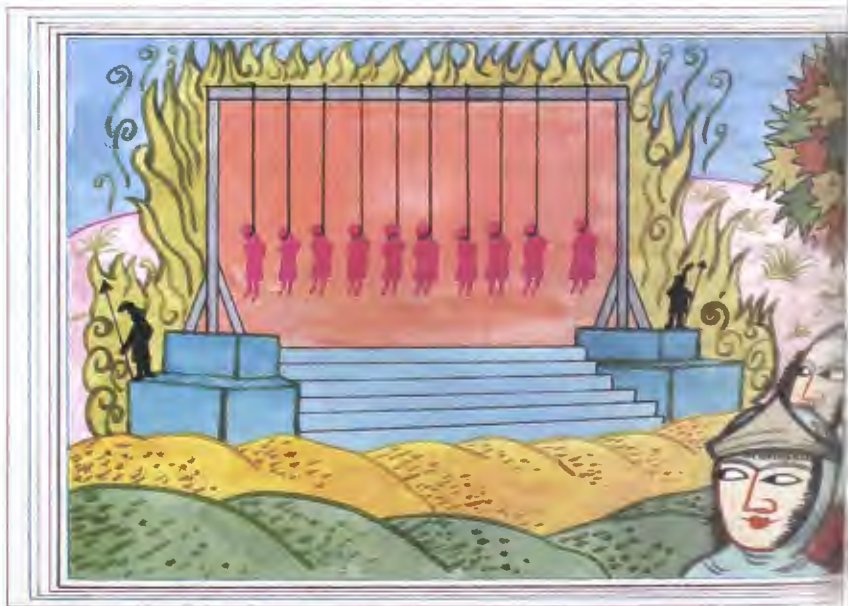
7. and Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,

8. and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,

9. and Parmashta and Arissai, and Aridai, and Vaizatha.

10. They killed the ten sons of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they did not steal any of their property.

9:10 Rabbi Adda of Joppa said, "The ten sons of Haman and the word 'ten' should be said in one breath." What is the reason? Because all their souls departed together.



שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם: יא בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּא מִסְפֵּר הַהֲרוּגִים בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה
 לַפָּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: יב וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה הֲרָגוּ
 הַיְּהוּדִים וְאֶבֶד חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְאֵת עֶשְׂרֵת בְּנֵי־הָמֶן בְּשֹׂאֵר
 מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מֶה עָשׂוּ וּמַה־שָּׁאֲלֹתֶיךָ וַיַּנְתֵּן לָךְ וּמַה־בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עוֹד
 וְחַעֲשׂ: יג וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִנָּתֶן גַּם־מָחָר לַיהוּדִים
 אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשׁן לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכַת הַיּוֹם וְאֵת עֶשְׂרֵת בְּנֵי־הָמֶן יַחְלוּ עַל־הָעֵץ:
 יד וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן נִתְּנָתְךָ בְּשׁוֹשׁן וְאֵת עֶשְׂרֵת בְּנֵי־הָמֶן
 תָּלוּ: טו וַיִּקְהֲלוּ הַיְּהוּדָיִים (הַיְּהוּדִים קרי) אֲשֶׁר־בְּשׁוֹשׁן גַּם בַּיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה
 עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר וַיַּהֲרֹגוּ בְּשׁוֹשׁן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וּבִבְזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ
 אֶת־יָדָם: טז וּשְׂאֵר הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּמְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִקְהֲלוּ וַיַּעֲמִדוּ
 עַל־נַפְשָׁם וְנוֹחַ מֵאֲבִיָּהֶם וְהָרוּג בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁבָעִים אֶלֶף
 וּבִבְזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם: יז בַּיּוֹם־שְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר וְנוֹחַ
 בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֻחָה: יח וְהַיְּהוּדָיִים
 (וְהַיְּהוּדִים קרי) אֲשֶׁר־בְּשׁוֹשׁן נִקְהֲלוּ בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וּבְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר
 בּוֹ וְנוֹחַ בְּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֻחָה: יט עַל־כֵּן
 הַיְּהוּדִים הַפְּרוּזִים (הַפְּרוּזִים קרי) הִישָׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרוּזוֹת עוֹשִׂים אֶת יוֹם
 אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר שְׂמֻחָה וּמְשֻׁתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב וּמְשַׁלֵּחַ מְנוֹת
 אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ: כ וַיִּכְתֹּב מֶרְדֳּכָי אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח סִפְרִים
 אֶל־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־ מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחֻשְׁוֹרוּשׁ הַקְּרוּבִים
 וְהָרַחֲוִקִים: כא לְקִיָּם עֲלֵיהֶם לְהִיּוֹת עוֹשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר
 לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר וְאֵת יוֹם־חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וּשְׁנָה: כב בְּיָמִים
 אֲשֶׁר־נָחֲוּ בָהֶם הַיְּהוּדִים מֵאֲבִיָּהֶם וְהַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן

9:15 The Jews did not steal any of the property from their enemies. The money and property went into the king's treasury.

Contrast this with the Hamanites, who wanted to steal Jewish property for themselves.

9:19 The law of "Shusan Purim," celebrating Purim on the fifteenth day of Adar, is not specifically mentioned in the Megillah. The rabbis derived the law of "Shusan Purim" from verses 19 and 21.

11. That day, the king learned how many people were killed in the capital of Shushan.

12. Then the king said to Queen Esther: "The Jews have killed 500 enemies and the ten sons of Haman in the capital of Shushan alone; just imagine what they have done in my other provinces! Now, what else do you want? Tell me and I will do it!"

13. Then Esther said, "If it pleases your majesty, allow the Jews in Shushan to do tomorrow what they did today, and let Haman's sons be hanged on the gallows as an object lesson for all to see."

14. And the king commanded that it should be done; and the decree was issued in Shushan, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

15. And on the fourteenth day of Adar the Jews in Shushan killed 300 more of their enemies, but they did not steal any of their property.

16. Meanwhile, the Jews in the other provinces gathered together to defend themselves against their enemies; they killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they did not steal any of their property.

17. On the thirteenth day of the month of Adar they rested, and on the fourteenth day they celebrated their victory with feasting and with joy.

18. The Jews in Shushan assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month, and on the fifteenth day they celebrated their victory with feasting and joy.

19. Therefore the Jews who live in the villages celebrate the fourteenth day of Adar with joyous feasting and by exchanging gifts (*shalach manot*).

20. Mordechi recorded these events; he sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, to all the provinces of the king,

21. urging them to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar every year as a holiday.

22. It was on those historic days that the Jews were saved from their enemies, and it was the month when their sorrow was changed to joy, and their mourning to happiness, making them into days of feasting and joy, and of exchanging gifts (*shalach manot*), and giving *tzedakah* to the poor.

9:13 Pockets of Haman's army of anti-Semites still existed. So Esther asked for another day in which to annihilate the killers.

לשִׁמְחָהּ וּמֵאֵל לְיוֹם טוֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מִשְׁתָּהּ וְשִׁמְחָהּ
 וּמִשְׁלַח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרַעְהוּ וּמִתְּנוּת לְאֲבִינָם: כג וּקְבֹל הַיְּהוּדִים אֶת
 אֲשֶׁר-הִחֲלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-פָּתַב מְרֻכְכֵי אֲלֵיהֶם: כד כִּי הָמָן בֶּן-
 הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי צָרַר כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים חָשַׁב עַל-הַיְּהוּדִים לֵאמֹרם לֵאבֹדָם וְהַפֵּל
 פוֹר הוּא הַגּוֹבֵל לְהַמָּם וּלְאֲבֹדָם: כה וּבִבְאֵה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אָמַר עַם-
 הַסֵּפֶר יָשׁוּב מִחֻשְׁבָּתוֹ הִרְעָה אֲשֶׁר-חָשַׁב עַל-הַיְּהוּדִים עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ
 וְחָלוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֵת-בְּגָדוֹ עַל-הָעֵץ: כו עַל-כֵּן קָרְאוּ לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה פּוּרִים
 עַל-שֵׁם הַפּוֹר עַל-כֵּן עַל-כָּל-דְּבָרֵי הָאֲגָרָת הַזֹּאת וּמֵה-רָאוּ עַל-פָּכָה
 וּמֵה הִגִּיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם: כז קִיְּמוּ וּקְבֹל (וּקְבֹלוּ קרי) הַיְּהוּדִים | עֲלֵיהֶם | וְעַל-
 זִרְעָם וְעַל כָּל-הַנָּלוּיִם עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר לְהַנִּיחַ עֲשִׂים אֶת-שְׁנֵי
 הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּחֻכָּם וְכִזְמָנָם בְּכָל-שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה: כח וְהַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה
 נִזְכָּרִים וְנַעֲשִׂים בְּכָל-דּוֹר וְדוֹר מִשְׁפָּחָהּ וּמִשְׁפָּחָהּ מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ

9:28 The word "memory" refers to the reading of the Megillah.



23. And they adopted Mordechi's suggestion and made it a yearly custom.

24. Because Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, plotted to exterminate the Jews just by a throw of the dice (pur).

25. But when Queen Esther brought it to the king's attention, he issued an official decree that Haman's evil extermination plan should be on his own head and that he and his ten sons should be hung.

26. So today, we call this holiday Purim, because of the word pur, which means "throwing the dice," because of the contents of the letter, and because of what had happened to them.

27. The Jews agreed to celebrate the holiday of Purim and pass it on to their children; they also decided to observe these two days every year.

28. And the days should be remembered and observed by each family in every generation, in every city and province, so that the memory of the days of Purim never cease among their descendants.

9:27 Those who became Jews and those who, in the future, would become Jews.



וְעִיר וְעִיר וַיְמִי הַפּוֹרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְּהוּדִים וְזָכְרָם
 לֹא-יִסּוּף מִזֶּרַע־ם: ׀ וַתִּכְתֹּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה בַת-אַבִּיתָיִל וּמָרְדֳּכָי
 הַיְּהוּדִי אֶת- כָּל-תִּקְוָהּ לָקִים אֶת-אַגַּרְת הַפָּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשְּׁנִית:
 ל וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים אֶל-שְׂבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה
 מִלְּכוֹת אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם וְאַמֶּת: לֹא לָקִים אֶת-יְמֵי הַפָּרִים
 הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר קִים עֲלֵיהֶם מָרְדֳּכָי הַיְּהוּדִי וְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה
 וּכְאֲשֶׁר קִימוּ עַל-נַפְשָׁם וְעַל-זֶרַע־ם דְּבָרֵי הַצּוֹמֹת וְזַעֲקָתָם:
 לב וּמֵאַמֶּר אֶסְתֵּר קִים דְּבָרֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְתָּב בַּסֵּפֶר: ׀

פֶּרֶק י'

י א וַיֵּשֶׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ (אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ קרי) ׀ מִסַּע עַל- הָאָרֶץ וְאֵי הַיָּם:
 ב וְכִלְמַעֲשָׂה תִקְפוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ וּפְרָשֵׁת גְּדֻלַּת מָרְדֳּכָי אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ
 הַמֶּלֶךְ הַלּוֹא-הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל-סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מְדִי וּפָרָס:
 ג כִּי ׀ מָרְדֳּכָי הַיְּהוּדִי מִשְׁנֶה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וּגְדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וְרָצוּי
 לְרֹב אֲחָיו דִּרְשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמּוֹ וְדָבָר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ:

חוק

10:3 Mordechi, the new grand vizier, projected Persian power beyond its traditional and historical boundaries.

Even countries not included in the Persian Empire paid taxes to King Achashverosh.

10:3 This is the last verse among the four verses read aloud by the congregation during the reading of the Megillah.

The Megillah reader then repeats the verses.

10:3 Not only did Mordechi help people who came to him with requests but he searched for ways to ease the life of his fellow Jews.

After the reading of the Megillah, the following blessing is recited:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ. אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. הָרֹב אֶת-רִיבוֹנוּ. וְהִדֵּן אֶת-
 דִּיעֵנוּ. וְהַנּוֹקֵם אֶת-נַקְמָתָנוּ. וְהַנּוֹפֵר עָלֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ. וְהַמְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּלָה
 לְכָל-אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשָׁנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ. הַנּוֹפֵר עָלֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְכַל-
 צָרֵיהֶם. הָאֵל הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ:

29. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abichail and Mordechi the Jew, wrote a second letter confirming the establishment of the holiday of Purim.

30. And he sent letters to all the Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, with messages of goodwill and peace.

31. to confirm that they observe the days of Purim, on the correct date, as Mordechi and Esther had decreed and as they had set for themselves and for their descendants, including the rules for the fast and the Purim prayers.

32. And Esther's decree officially confirmed the holiday of Purim in writing —

CHAPTER TEN

1. And the king set a tax on his kingdom and the islands which belonged to him.

2. His mighty deeds, on account of the greatness of Mordechi, and the honor bestowed upon him by the king are all recorded in the history of the kings of Media and Persia.

3. For Mordechi the Jew was second in power to King Ah-chash-ver-osh. He was respected by the Jews, and revered by great numbers of his countrymen; he constantly worked for the welfare of his people and for the goodwill of all their descendants.

THE END

9:29 At first, only Mordechi promoted the festival of Purim and the religious obligations to observe it. But since that did not persuade all the Jews in the Persian Empire, both Esther and Mordechi wrote the second letter about the religious obligation to observe the new holiday of Purim.

9:31 The Nazis forbid the reading of the Megillah for fear that it might spark hope and resistance. However, the Jews in the extermination camps wrote and read the Megillah from memory despite the threat of instant executions.

9:32 Esther requested the wise men of her generation to record the events of the period. This record is the Megillah.

After the reading of the Megillah, the following blessing is recited:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who heard our plea and passed judgment on our behalf, avenging us by punishing our mortal foes and bringing punishment upon our bitter enemies. Blessed are You, Lord, who delivers the people of Israel from all their enemies, for you are God who saves.

PURIM LAWS

1. Purim is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar.

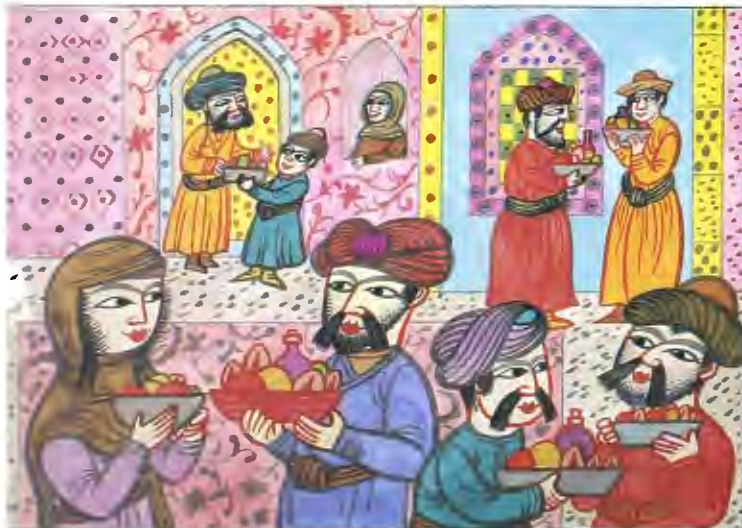
2. Before the reading of the Megillah, it is customary for every adult to contribute *Machzit Hashekel* ("half-a-shekel") to *tzedakah*. The *Machzit Hashekel* is a remembrance of the shekel Jews used to donate in the month of Adar for the upkeep of the Holy Temple. It is customary to give the equivalent of three coins because the term *Machzit Hashekel* is mentioned three times in the same biblical paragraph.

3. The day before Purim (13th of Adar) is the Fast of Esther. On this day, we remember Esther and the Jews of Persia, who fasted and prayed for deliverance from Haman's evil decree. We too fast on that day.

4. The best way to observe the Mitzvah of hearing the Megillah is to listen to it "among a multitude of people in a synagogue."

5. The day after Purim is called Shushan Purim. According to the Megillah, the Jews of Shushan celebrated their victory over Haman a day later than the other Jews because they fought one additional day.

6. It is an established custom for the Megillah reader to unroll the Megillah and fold it, folio on folio, just like a letter. The Megillah tells us that Mordecai sent a letter to the



Jewish communities of Persia. The folding of the Megillah symbolizes this event.

7. The Megillah reader recites three blessings before the recitation.

8. After the Megillah is read and rolled up completely, the reader recites a final blessing.

9. If there is no one in the congregation who can read the Megillah with the proper intonations, one may read it without the musical intonations.

10. To fulfill the mitzvah of *Shalach Manot* one must give at least two portions to one friend and tzedakah to at least two poor people. *Shalach Manot* should be sent in the daytime.

11. The *Shalach Manot* should be gifts of food which can be eaten without further preparation.

12. Purim should be celebrated by eating, drinking, and making merry. On the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Adar one should make a Purim Seudah feast. This feast, often eaten with family and friends, usually extends into the night.



PURIM FACTS

Adloyada: There's a talmudic proverb saving that one should drink merrily on Purim, until one is so tipsy that one knows not (*ad d'lo yada*) the difference between "blessed be Mordecai" (*barukh Mordecai*) and "cursed be Haman" (*arur Haman*). This expression has given the name to the annual Adloyada Purim Carnivals in Israel, gala affairs complete with floats, streamers, costumes, and balloons.

Gragger: Noisemaking at the mention of Haman's name during the reading of the Scroll of Esther is an old, old custom. The gragger has been in use since the thirteenth century in France and Germany. It combines two primitive instruments: the "bull-roarer" and the "scraper." The "bull-roarer" consisted of a long stick at the top of which was attached a string and at the end of the string a thin board. When this was twirled, it made a strange noise. The "scraper" is a notched shell or bone which was scraped with a stiff object. The gragger combines both these objects. In some countries, Haman's name was written on the soles of the shoes, which were rubbed on the floor during the Megillah reading.

The Jews of Provence and France used to write the name of Haman on stones. When Haman's name was mentioned by the Megillah reader, children erased it by rubbing two stones against each other. Thus the spirit of the biblical injunction to erase the memory of Amalek was fulfilled.

Austrian Jews drown out the name Haman. They encourage their children to clap two stones in order to create a booing effect. Adults used to whisper *zecher tzadik liverachah* ("may the memory of the righteous be a blessing") after the mention of Mordechi's name, and *shem reshaim yirkav* ("may the name of the wicked rot") after Haman's.

Megillah: The Megillah, the story of Queen Esther, is read in the synagogue on the joyous festival of Purim. Whenever the name of the wicked Haman (from whose vicious plot Queen Esther saved her people, the Jews of Persia) is read, the children make noises to drown out his name. The Megillah used in the synagogue is written just like the Torah scroll; but for home use there are also illustrated editions. Some medieval Megillot have beautiful illuminations; others have engravings and woodcuts. Some are kept in beautiful cases of carved wood, tooled silver or fine filigree work. Purim is a joyful festival and Jews have derived joy from the Megillah for many centuries.

Hamantashen: These are the Purim pastries without which no Purim celebration would be complete. They are three-cornered little cakes filled with poppy seeds or plum jam. Some say that the name comes from *mohntashen*, or “poppy seed pouches”; others claim that the cakes resemble Haman’s hat! An interesting sidelight is that in Hebrew a hamantash is called *ozen Haman*, or “Haman’s Ear.”

Mishloah Manot: Often called *Shalach Monos*, this means the “sending of gifts.” The custom is mentioned in the Book of Esther — “make them days of feasting and joy, of sending portions to one another.” That’s where we get the oh-so-wonderful custom of giving and receiving presents on Purim!

Purim Fun: Because happiness and fun are key aspects of Purim, play-acting or mummery has been a traditional part of this holiday for centuries. The Purim play, a standard feature in Jewish schools today, has a long and honorable ancestry. Purim plays were first presented in Italy and Germany, and spread to Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Galicia, Rumania, and other countries in Eastern Europe.

Purim-time became the Jewish theatrical season, and in some European communities, Purim “show-time” lasted for two whole weeks.

Usually the *shpieler*, or actors, made up their lines as they went along, throwing in as many jokes as possible. Clowns and fools and other fanciful characters somehow mixed their way into the performances. In one play, there was a clown named Pickle-Herring, who played practical jokes on spectators in the audience.

Most of the time, the plays were presented with song and dance by the wandering Purim-*shpieler*, accompanied by musicians. They visited house after house, performed their show, and received contributions after they sang a jingle like this one: “Today is Purim, tomorrow no more; Give me a penny, I’ll be gone from your door!”

These Purim plays gave way to indoor plays, carnivals, and masquerades.

Zakhor: It means “remember,” and Shabbat Zakhor is the Sabbath before Purim. An extra portion of the Torah is read. This portion tells of the evil that Amalek did to our ancestors. The Haftarah, or portion of the Prophets, read on Shabbat Zakhor describes King Saul’s meeting with Agag, ruler of the Amalekites, since Haman is portrayed as an Agagite, a direct descendent of Amalek.